



Immigrant & Refugee Resource Collaborative (IRRC)

A place where New Americans are celebrated and believed to be critical to Mid-Michigan's economic and cultural vibrancy.

December 2, 2016

Dear Members of the House Local Government Committee,

My name is Shirin Kambin and I am the coordinator of the Immigrant and Refugee Resource Collaborative (IRRC) in Mid-Michigan.

I am contacting you to oppose HCR 28 as I believe the underlying assumptions of this bill suggesting resettlement agencies are not coordinating efforts with local communities, and the system is without adequate security check, are inaccurate.

In Mid-Michigan we know the following to be true:

1. On a quarterly basis the IRRC hosts a community consultation with the State Refugee Coordinator, refugee providing agencies, and the larger community. On average, this meeting is attended by 25 people each quarter.
2. On a monthly basis this same group – minus the State Coordinator – meets to talk about needs, resources, capacity and developments. IRRC notes are taken and distributed to a list of 329 stakeholders (this list continues to grow). Stakeholders include public officials and their representatives at the city, county, state and federal levels, ethnic community leaders, and partners in the faith, nonprofit, educational, human services, and employment sectors of our community.
3. In 2016 alone we have had 82 people from 47 different entities/departments come to the IRRC to share, learn and contribute. The monthly IRRC meeting is open to the public and we have a core group that comes to every meeting as well as an outer ring of stakeholders who follow community developments and are in touch with the IRRC and resettlement agencies on a regular basis. These stakeholders are from governmental offices as well as the Department of Health and Human Services, our County Health Department, public schools, nonprofits, employers, American Red Cross, public library, and our interfaith community.
4. Because we are committed to refugee resettlement and integration, in June 2016 we held a community conversation where 20 community stakeholders detailed examples of how we are a welcoming city, how we know newcomers are integrating, and how we know long term residents support resettlement. We believe it is important to tell our own story of Mid-Michigan before someone else tells our story. We have recently put in place a subcommittee which will explore how to best compile the community responses in a manner that celebrates our pride in being a Welcoming City. It should be noted that employers remarked on the work ethic newcomers bring to our country, nonprofits spoke of the nearly 1,000 volunteers in our community who devote time and resources to helping refugees integrate, and our public schools, health department and other public entities spoke of how they have worked hard to create language access opportunities for new arrivals because their contribution is critical to our region. Greater Lansing offers English language classes across the



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area, parents are attending parent teacher conferences in their new schools, and our public library is excited to fold in the needs, interests and goals new arrival populations.

We have no evidence on any systemic or broad scale resistance to resettlement and we have no evidence that public officials or community stakeholders are unaware or unsupportive of resettlement.

Finally, with regard to security, the community has been regularly educated on the vetting process mandated by the US government. The Department of Homeland Security/USCIS website is often references and disseminated to help our long term residents discern rhetoric from fact. Moreover, because our newcomers continue to develop relationships with long term residents, fears continue to be put to rest as our American born populations learn how and why refugees have come to Lansing.

The IRRC is proud to serve as one of many common tables of conversation and collaboration in our community. Mid-Michigan is a place where our American born population interacts with, learns from, and helps teach our newer arrivals how to build a life in our neighborhoods, schools, places of work and worship.

We ask, as you consider HRC 28, you take the above into consideration and understand we oppose this resolution because it is incongruent with our local reality.

Thank you,

Shirin Kambin Timms

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IRRC Coordinator